

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY EUR;SOV;MLEVITSKY:REH

APPROVED BY EUR;JGLOWENSTEIN

S/S - SESTEINER

C - JMONTGOMERY

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O 290102Z SEP 76 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 241529 TOSEC 280011

EXDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SREF, UR, US

SUBJECT: MEETING BETWEEN MIG-25 PILOT AND SOVIET EMBASSY
REPRESENTATIVES

1. SUMMARY: MEETING BETWEEN SOVIET EMBASSY REPRESENTA-
TIVES AND MIG PILOT BELENKO WAS HELD IN THE DEPARTMENT
WITHOUT INCIDENT. BELENKO MADE CLEAR THAT HIS ACTIONS WERE
VOLUNTARY AND PLANNED IN ADVANCE. VORONTSOV WAS APPRECIA-
TIVE THAT MEETING WAS ARRANGED. HE IMPLIED THE SUBJECT MAY
ARISE IN GROMYKO'S MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE
SECRETARY. END SUMMARY

2. BASED ON SOVIET EMBASSY REQUEST OF SEPTEMBER 23 AND
AGREEMENT BY MIG-25 PILOT BELENKO, DEPARTMENT ARRANGED
MEETING BETWEEN SOVIET EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVES AND BELENKO,
WHICH TOOK PLACE IN DEPARTMENT AT 4:00 P.M., SEPTEMBER 28.
MEETING WAS CHAIRED BY OIC BILATERAL AFFAIRS, EUR/SOV
AND WAS ATTENDED BY TWO OFFICERS FROM EUR/SOV AND DEPARTMENT
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INTERPRETER. SOVIET EMBASSY REPS WERE DCM VORONTSOV,

COUNSELOR FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS KAVALEROV, AND SOVIET EMBASSY DOCTOR TRISHIN. MEETING LASTED APPROXIMATELY 50 MINUTES. ALL RUSSIAN WAS TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH AND VICE VERSA.

3. DEPARTMENT OFFICERS MADE CLEAR FROM OUTSET THAT MEETING WAS NOT RPT NOT ARRANGED BECAUSE OF ANY OBLIGATION UNDER US-USSR CONSULAR CONVENTION OR VIENNA CONVENTION, SINCE BELENKO WAS NOT UNDER ARREST OR DETENTION BY US AUTHORITIES, BUT BECAUSE BELENKO HIMSELF HAD AGREED TO MEETING REQUESTED BY SOVIET EMBASSY. DEPARTMENT OFFICERS ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED AND THAT IT WAS ENTIRELY BELENKO'S DECISION AS TO WHETHER AND HOW HE SHOULD RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS.

4. VORONTSOV MADE PITCH CENTERED ON CONCERN OF BELENKO'S MOTHER, WIFE AND SMALL SON AND THEIR LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED. HE SAID SOVIET GOVERNMENT WAS CONVINCED THAT BELENKO HAD MADE A FORCED LANDING AND THAT SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS WERE IMPOSED ON HIM. VORONTSOV CLAIMED THAT SOVIET GOVERNMENT HAD NO CLAIMS OR COMPLAINTS AGAINST BELENKO AND THAT HE COULD RETURN TO THE SOVIET UNION AND LIVE A TROUBLE-FREE, QUIET LIFE IF HE WISHED. VORONTSOV ATTEMPTED TO PASS PHOTOGRAPHS, LETTERS AND TAPES FROM BELENKO'S FAMILY, BUT BELENKO REFUSED TO TAKE THEM. VORONTSOV ALSO LEFT WITH DEPARTMENT OFFICERS A LETTER FROM BELENKO'S WIFE TO PRESIDENT FORD APPEALING FOR HIS RETURN. VORONTSOV STATED THAT HE KNEW BELENKO HAD BEEN CAREFULLY PREPARED FOR THE MEETING AND DISCOUNTED BELENKO'S STATEMENT THAT HE HAD TAKEN ALL ACTIONS OF HIS OWN FREE WILL.

5. DEPARTMENT OFFICERS REJECTED SUGGESTION OF PREPARATION, SAID THEY COULD NOT CONFIRM VORONTSOV'S STATEMENTS THAT OTHER SOVIET DEFECTORS HAD EVENTUALLY RETURNED TO LIVE IN THE SOVIET UNION WITHOUT TROUBLE, AND REITERATED THAT BELENKO COULD CHOOSE TO RESPOND OR NOT RESPOND TO QUESTIONS AS HE DESIRED.

6. BELENKO TOLD SOVIET EMBASSY REPS THAT HE HAD CAREFULLY PLANNED HIS DEFECTION AND THAT ASKING FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM

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IN THE US WAS HIS OWN DECISION. HE SAID HE WAS NOT HARASSED OR THREATENED BUT HAD MADE HIS CHOICE AS A QUOTE FREE MAN UNQUOTE. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, HE STATED THAT HE WAS NOT TAKING QUOTE PILLS UNQUOTE OR MEDICATION. HE REFUSED TO GO INTO THE REASONS FOR HIS DEFECTION EXCEPT TO SAY THAT THEY WERE MANY AND THAT THE ANSWER COULD BE FOUND IN THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF. HE SAID HE DID NOT WISH TO RECEIVE ANY COMMUNICATIONS FROM

HIS FAMILY OR FROM THE SOVIET UNION. HE SAID HIS WIFE WOULD GET A DIVORCE. BELENKO SAID HE DID NOT WISH TO BE BOTHERED, HARASSED OR QUOTE TERRORIZED UNQUOTE BY THE SOVIET EMBASSY AND MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WISHED NO FURTHER MEETINGS WITH SOVIET EMBASSY REPS.

7. MEETING WAS RELATIVELY RELAXED GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND DEPT OFFICERS DID NOT HAVE TO CUT OFF IMPROPER QUESTIONS. ALTHOUGH BELENKO WAS UNDERSTANDABLY NERVOUS WHEN CONFRONTED WITH VORONTSOV'S PRESENTATION, HE WAS HAPPY WHEN MEETING WAS OVER AND THANKED DEPARTMENT OFFICERS FOR THEIR PART IN IT.

8. SOVIET EMBASSY REPS SAID THEY WERE GRATEFUL THAT MEETING WAS ARRANGED, BUT DID NOT ADMIT VALIDITY OF BELENKO'S RESPONSES. THEY CLEARLY WANTED TO STATE FOR THE RECORD SOVIET GOVERNMENT POSITION THAT BELENKO MADE A MISTAKE AND WAS FORCED TO DEFECT BY JAPANESE AND US AUTHORITIES. THEY TOLD BELENKO THAT FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO WOULD BE MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY AND IMPLIED THAT BELENKO CASE WOULD BE TAKEN UP WITH THEM. THEY MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY DID NOT CONSIDER CASE CLOSED. ROBINSON

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